

their country in a manner which promotes international understanding and which makes all Americans proud.

And so I join the Peace Corps Director, Gaddi H. Vasquez, and his dedicated staff at both Peace Corps Headquarters and in the field, in honoring those over eight thousand volunteers, currently serving in 71 countries around the world, as well as those who served in the past. The present volunteers, at a time of increased security concerns in many overseas locales, deserve special recognition for their decision to leave family and friends, home and hearth, and their comfortable, secure lives behind in pursuit of the Peace Corps mission of "world peace and friendship."

Former volunteers often use the linguistic and cultural skills they acquired in Peace Corps service later in their professional lives. They sometimes find themselves continuing to work with distinction in the fields of government and international affairs. Their ranks include current Members of the House and Senate as well as Congressional staff. In this regard, these "RPCVs," as returned volunteers are called, continue to make a contribution, providing windows of understanding regarding diverse cultures of which most Americans have only a scant knowledge. Every year around this March 1st anniversary date, returned volunteers visit classrooms and community centers around the United States to carry their message of international friendship and understanding. At a time of heightened sensitivity to the need for greater cultural understanding of peoples from different traditions, the insights of former Peace Corps volunteers constitute a too little recognized national treasure.

There is one endeavor related to the Peace Corps put forward during my tenure as Chairman of the International Relations Committee of which I am particularly proud. This is the legislative effort undertaken by myself and my good friend from across the aisle, TOM LANTOS, to see that there was sufficient funding to achieve President Bush's goal of increasing the size of Peace Corps. This undertaking was one concrete means for addressing the new challenges to international mutual understanding found in our post-September 11th world. Let us all hope that the Peace Corps continues to grow as one response to these challenges. Money spent on the Peace Corps is money well spent.

And so, today, I send greetings to those serving around the world who have asked for little in return while asking what they, themselves, could do for their country. Whether this message finds you on some Caribbean isle, high in the Andes mountains, along a river in western Africa, in a sub-Saharan village, in a classroom in eastern Europe, on the steppes of Mongolia, in a river town in China, in a crowded urban center in Bangladesh, or far away in the South Pacific, I send you salutations on your anniversary date. Thank you for your service as America's Goodwill Ambassadors along the world's highways and byways. May you achieve every professional and personal success and may the Peace Corps flourish for the next 45 years.

CONGRATULATING THE PALM HARBOR UNIVERSITY BOYS AND GIRLS VARSITY TEAMS FOR WINNING THE FLORIDA STATE SOCCER CHAMPIONSHIPS

HON. C.W. BILL YOUNG

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 1, 2006

Mr. YOUNG of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I invite my colleagues to join me in recognizing the accomplishments of Palm Harbor University High School boys and girls varsity soccer teams. Both teams were recently crowned 2006 Florida State Soccer Champions (Class 5A).

The Palm Harbor University Hurricanes boys' team (26-4) shut out defending champion, Auburndale, 3-0 to claim the state title. The girls' team (20-1) also left their competition scoreless, as they triumphed over Bloomingdale High School 2-0 to win the Class 5A finals.

This was the second state championship for the Palm Harbor University boys (2002, 2006) and the third title for the girls team (1999, 2000, and 2006). Palm Harbor University made history with the 2006 championships, marking only the second time in Florida where a public school won boys and girls soccer titles in the same year.

For the benefit of my colleagues, following my remarks I will include reports from the St. Petersburg Times about the championship efforts of these two teams.

Congratulations to Coach Mike Mannino and Coach John Planamente for their leadership, dedication and the positive examples they set. In addition, Principal Harry Brown and his administration, Athletic Director Bob Heintz, the faculty and staff, the parents, the students, the alumni and the fans should all be applauded for their community spirit and faithful support. Most importantly, I would like to commend those outstanding student athletes who exemplified the meaning of sportsmanship, hard work and competitive spirit. All around, a job well done! You have made us all proud and we look forward to supporting Palm Harbor University boys and girls soccer teams next year.

[From the St. Petersburg Times, Feb. 10, 2006]

PALM HARBOR CLAIMS THIRD STATE CROWN (By Keith Nebuhr)

FORT LAUDERDALE.—One day after stunning the Nation's top-ranked team, Palm Harbor U. claimed an even bigger victory.

And this one comes with a ring.

Behind solid play on both ends, the Hurricanes defeated Bloomingdale 2-0 in the Class 5A final at Lockhart Stadium on Thursday night to complete 2 days in South Florida the players aren't soon to forget. Annie Stalzer's goal in the 48th minute gave PHU the lead. Kelly Brinkman added a score in the 78th minute that iced it.

When the game ended, PHU players raced toward the sideline to celebrate with fans. After accepting the gold medals and the championship trophy, they took a team picture. Many then called friends and relatives on their cell phones to give them the news.

"We've been play so well" Stalzer said. "This is the perfect season! We couldn't ask for anything better."

The title is the third for PHU (20-1), which also earned championships in 1999 and 2000.

The Hurricanes lost to Fort Lauderdale St. Thomas Aquinas 3-0 in last season's final, but this time, the Hurricanes weren't to be denied. Since the start of its district tournament (a span of seven games), PHU outscored opponents 24-2. And it beat Aquinas 2-1 in the semifinals.

"The experience of being here helped," Hurricanes coach John Planamenta said. "Every year, we've taken another step."

Bloomingdale (24-2-1), going for its second title, had allowed 10 goals all season before Thursday. Only once had an opponent scored more than one. In the playoffs, just one of the Bulls' previous opponents found the net.

"They played a great game," Bloomingdale coach Sue Peet said of PHU.

PHU outshot Bloomingdale 16-4 (the Bulls had two shots in the first 75 minutes) and made sure it had two or three defenders around star midfielder Marissa Kazbour at all times.

PHU was equally solid on offense. But though the Hurricanes constantly pressured Bloomingdale's defense, they couldn't break a scoreless tie until Stalzer's goal, which bounced off one defender and over the head of goalkeeper Cristina Coca.

[From the St. Petersburg Times, Feb. 17, 2006]

PHU MAKES HISTORY IN VICTORY (By Brandon Wright)

FORT LAUDERDALE—Nate Wysk dropped flat on his back, extending his arms to the sky. Nick Eby ran full speed by midfield and slid across the moist grass. Eugene Starikov was scooped up by booster club vice president Doug Eby, who carried the diminutive striker like a baby. And of course, coach Mike Mannino got the customary Gatorade bath.

Palm Harbor University (26-4) scored a pair of goals in a three-minute span of the first half to complete a torrid run through the final four with a 3-0 win against defending champion Auburndale for the 5A state crown.

The Hurricanes became the sixth school ever, and second public school, to win both boys and girls soccer titles in the same year.

The PHU girls beat Bloomingdale 2-0 last week. It was the second boys championship in school history, the first coming in 2002.

"We put our whole hearts into winning state and we fulfilled our goal," Starikov said. "We won a state championship, baby!"

"I was very nervous coming in," said Eby, who scored PHU's first goal. "But we deserve this, we worked so hard every day at practice."

PHU rolled through the final four games, outscoring opponents 8-0. The Hurricanes also put an end to Auburndale's 22-game win streak.

"To come in and give up no goals at this level of play and score eight goals grand total is awesome," Mannino said.

Much like the semifinal where PHU scored four goals in an 11-minute stretch, the Hurricanes struck quickly against Auburndale (24-2). Eby and Thomas Harrington scored three minutes apart right at the end of the first half, seizing momentum just before the break.

"Every team in the playoffs has been strong, but we took over with those two goals right before half," Eby said.

Both teams had quality chances in the first half before PHU broke through. Ishmail Kamara's shot from point-blank range was smothered by Auburndale goalkeeper Derek Miller and Brent Hileman just got fingers to Kyle Sample's attempt, ricocheting the ball against the crossbar before it was cleared.

But it was Eby, who came into the game with just two goals, who got the only strike

PHU would need in the 35th minute. Josh Roberts played a cross in from the right flank that Starikov and Miller both went up for. Starikov just got a piece of the ball and it deflected right to a waiting Eby.

"I'd barely scored all year and to get the first goal of the state championship is just crazy," Eby said. "This feels amazing."

Harrington put PHU up 2-0 in the 38th minute with his sixth strike of the season. Kamara got his head on a strong throw in from Max Venker, sending it toward the middle of the box. The ball fell into a scramble of legs and squirted free right to Harrington, who was running full speed from midfield and the senior defender squarely drilled it into upper left corner.

"The ball kind of fumbled out while I was running up," Harrington said. "And it was just right there."

Hileman was brilliant in goal, making eight saves. The senior got tremendous help from fullbacks Nate Wysk, Levi Curnutte, Jamison Sweat and Harrington, shutting out an offense that featured 49-goal scorer Pascal Milien.

"Can't end a season any better than two goose eggs," Hileman said.

And what PHU win would be complete without a strike from Starikov? The junior transfer from California banged home his 43rd goal of the season in the 70th minute.

"Eugene wouldn't let the game end without getting one," Mannino said. "He wanted to be the last straw that broke their back and he did it."

ASSURED FUNDING FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

HON. LOUISE MCINTOSH SLAUGHTER

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 1, 2006

Ms. SLAUGHTER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to express my support for assured funding for the veterans' health care. For too long, funding for the critical services needed by our veterans has been subject to the political whims of Congress and the Administration and budgetary schemes intended to hide inefficiencies and misplaced priorities. With a new generation of veterans returning home from their duty overseas, we must ensure that the Department of Veterans Affairs has the resources necessary to honor the promises we have made to our veterans.

Last year, the Administration admitted that it had underestimated the number of servicemen and women requiring medical treatment upon return from their missions in Iraq and Afghanistan. Within one week, the Administration begrudgingly reported that the Department of Veterans Affairs was \$1 billion short of being able to fulfill its obligations to veterans for Fiscal Year 2005, and would be \$2.6 billion short of fulfilling its obligations for Fiscal Year 2006 without Emergency Supplemental Appropriations bills.

Efforts to fully restore funding were initially stymied by denial and vain attempts to save face by those who had condemned attempts to provide adequate funding to the VA during the traditional appropriations process. What should have been a quick fix to an embarrassing problem turned into a drawn out negotiation battle between those who argued that the VA needed only the barest minimum sum of money to carry out its mission and those

who demanded additional funding to guarantee veterans' health care would not be interrupted. Once again, veterans' healthcare was left in limbo while the Congressional Leadership played politics.

In the face of growing public outrage, the funding shortfall was eventually restored. But, it appears that we have learned nothing from the preventable incident. Yet again, veterans' health care will be subject to the lengthy, political appropriations process and the Administration's request again shortchanges veterans.

Mr. Speaker, our veterans dutifully and courageously honored their commitment to our Nation. Now, it is our turn to keep our promises. American veterans deserve better than to have their healthcare in constant jeopardy. I hope my colleagues will join me in supporting assured funding for veterans healthcare so that those who have served will always have the care they need when they need it. We can, and must, do better for our nation's veterans. With the most sincere gratitude for all that American veterans have done to protect our freedom.

IN RECOGNITION OF NATIONAL KIDNEY MONTH

HON. XAVIER BECERRA

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 1, 2006

Mr. BECERRA. Mr. Speaker, I rise on this first day of National Kidney Month to recognize the efforts of numerous dedicated individuals, many in this body, who work not only to increase awareness about the devastating effects of kidney disease, but who also look for ways to eradicate this debilitating disease once and for all.

Today, more than 400,000 Americans are living with the wretched pain and horrible inconvenience of kidney failure, leaving them dependent upon life-saving dialysis three to four times each week. Twenty million more have Chronic Kidney Disease, where patients experience a gradual deterioration of kidney function, the end result of which is kidney failure.

The leading causes of these diseases are diabetes and high blood pressure, which disproportionately affect African Americans and Latinos. Diabetes occurs at twice the rate in the African American community as it does in white Americans. As of 2002, two million Latino adults had been diagnosed with diabetes. High blood pressure is also more prevalent in these communities. In fact, one in three African American adults are affected by high blood pressure. According to the American Heart Association, the prevalence of hypertension in African Americans in the United States is among the highest in the world.

Both Chronic Kidney Disease and kidney failure disproportionately affect African Americans and Latinos. African Americans make up about 13 percent of the U.S. population but comprise 32 percent of patients treated for kidney failure, giving them a kidney failure rate that is 4.2 times greater than that of white Americans. Among patients with diabetes, Latinos are between 4.5 and 6.6 times more likely to develop kidney disease than non-Hispanic white Americans.

Given that early kidney disease has no symptoms, most people do not realize that

they are in danger of kidney failure. Therefore, it is critically important for all of us, whether it be members of Congress, health organizations or our extended families, to do our best to increase awareness of the dangers of kidney disease and encourage our family members, our friends and our neighbors who have high blood pressure and diabetes to ask their doctors to run simple blood and urine tests that can detect potential problems.

The good news is that once diagnosed, patients can receive high quality care. Individuals with kidney disease who are able to obtain treatment early experience a higher quality of life and are able to maintain more of their day-to-day activities, including keeping their jobs. This is a situation to which an ounce of prevention results in a gallon of future savings, both in quality of life and in hard dollars for individuals and for the government.

Mr. Speaker, I applaud the goals set forth in observance of National Kidney Month, for we must continue to raise awareness about this important issue and to show support for Americans living with kidney disease. But, I am concerned that in an environment in which our budgetary priorities include cutting funding for the National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Disease to the tune of \$20 million in fiscal year 2006 and '07, we are not doing enough to thwart the increase in kidney failure and the conditions from which it results. We cannot ignore the human suffering and financial consequences of kidney failure. Our failure to make this disease a major legislative priority will cost us greatly in the future.

BUCK O'NEILL SHOULD BE ADMITTED TO THE BASEBALL HALL OF FAME

HON. DENNIS MOORE

OF KANSAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 1, 2006

Mr. MOORE of Kansas. Mr. Speaker, I was sorely disappointed recently to learn that the Baseball Hall of Fame failed to vote to induct John Jordan "Buck" O'Neill into its ranks.

Born the grandson of slaves, Buck joined the Kansas City Monarchs of the Negro League in 1938. He remained in Kansas City with the Monarchs for 17 spectacular years, 10 as a player and 7 as manager. During this time he was named an all-star three times as a player, served 2 years with the United States Navy, and led the Monarchs to four league titles as a manager, all the while facing the harshness of separation and discrimination in a country that was still segregated. In 1962, Buck broke an important barrier, by being named the first African-American coach in the Major Leagues by the Chicago Cubs. After 33 years with the Cubs, Buck returned home in 1988 to scout for the Kansas City Royals. He currently serves as chairman of the Negro Leagues Baseball Museum in Kansas City, a continuing demonstration of his love for the game of baseball and for his commitment to the essential role that the Negro Leagues played in the integration of both American sport and American society.

During his time in Kansas City, Buck has taught the citizens of the Kansas City metropolitan region about the importance of determination and resolve in the face of hostility, in